



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL HENRY McMASTER
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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McMaster, Boys & Girls Clubs Announce Internet Safety Initiative

Columbia, S.C. – Attorney General Henry McMaster today announced a new partnership designed to teach children and teens how to stay safer on the Internet.

At a press conference held at the Ben Arnold Unit of the [Boys & Girls Clubs of the Midlands](#), McMaster announced that the summer programs for the Clubs across the Midlands will include the [Netsmartz Workshop](#) -- an Internet safety program originally developed by the [National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® \(NCMEC\)](#) for the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, and utilized by the [Attorney General's Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force \(ICAC\)](#).

Approximately one out of every five children who use the Internet regularly have received a sexual solicitation or approach over the Internet in the last year, according to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® (NCMEC). One in four had an unwanted exposure to pictures of naked people or people having sex in the last year.

This school year, the state's school resource officers began utilizing the NetSmartz Workshop as the interactive, educational safety resource for children and teens in schools across the state. School resource officers were trained on how to use NetSmartz 30 minute Internet safety presentations for grades K-12, and parents/communities.

Building on the progress the state's school resource officers began, the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Midlands will incorporate the very same Netsmartz Workshop into their summer programs at locations across the Midlands.

Boys & Girls Clubs of the Midlands operates six (6) Clubs and a summer camp designed to provide a safe place to learn and grow, ongoing relationships with caring, adult professionals, life-enhancing programs, character development experiences, hope and opportunity. The organization's mission is to inspire and enable all young people, especially those from disadvantaged circumstances, to realize their full potential as productive, responsible, and caring citizens.

“Using the state’s new Internet predator law, our undercover stings have been very successful in targeting these monsters before they can target our children,” said McMaster. “But that’s only half the battle. We must also teach our children how to avoid these predators before they become a victim in the first place.”

“The state’s school resource officers have done a remarkable job this year by teaching our children Internet safety using the Netsmartz program.” McMaster added. “Now, during the summer months, children have the opportunity to continue their exposure to this positive and effective tool by participating in the summer programs offered by the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Midlands.”

"The Boys & Girls Clubs of the Midlands are very excited to join this partnership with Attorney General McMaster," said James Brown, Chief Operating Officer. "With the continued rise of incidents involving youth on the Internet, this is the ideal time to partner with the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, the S.C. School Resource Officer Association and other local law enforcement and education professionals to promote the NetSmartz Internet safety workshops."

NetSmartz combines the newest technologies available and the most current information to create high-impact educational activities that are well received by even the most tech-savvy kids. Parents, guardians, educators, and law enforcement also have access to additional resources for learning and teaching about the dangers children may face online. NetSmartz was created by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® (NCMEC) and Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA).

With the help of make believe characters, children learn Internet safety concepts through interactive, 3-D, animated, online activities that are fun and educational.

“Clicky,” the friendly and hip spokesrobot, teaches young children in very simple terms about the possible dangers on the Internet, how to avoid them, and how to practice good “netiquette.” After introducing basic uses of the Internet, “Clicky” introduces children to the “Webville Outlaws.” These villains represent different Internet dangers.

Webville Outlaws like “Wanta-Know Wally” try to get personal information, while “Potty-Mouth Pete” uses bad language online, and “Look-at-Dis Louie” tries to show kids pictures of “things kids don’t want to see.” Another Outlaw, “Meet-Me Mack,” wants children to meet him in person.

Other characters like “Nettie and Webster,” two Internet cyber-siblings, talk about online risks and introduce children to the “WizzyWigs,” creepy characters who represent Internet dangers.

“Follow-You Fiona” shows children that people may not be who they say they are on the Internet. “Spamozoid” sends junk E-mail to lots of people, usually stuff that kids don’t want to see.

Teens are taught Internet safety principles through real-life stories told by teens. Two of the pieces, “Amy’s Choice” and “Julie’s Journey,” are actual recordings of victims recounting the consequences of their online choices.

McMaster was joined at today’s announcement by Boys & Girls Clubs of the Midlands Chief Operations Officer James Brown and Board Chairperson Mary Anne Jacobs, Executive Director of the South Carolina branch of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® (NCMEC) Margaret Frierson, and Jody Lynch, President of the state School Resource Officer’s Association.

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